

Ombuds Office Report

FY2023

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**UNIVERSITY
OMBUDS OFFICE**

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About the Annual Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the reader with an understanding of the engagement of the Ombuds Office with the KU community, during the FY2023 time period, (July 1, 2022-June 30th, 2023). Herein we focus primarily on providing perspective on trends and themes, related to the visitors and groups with whom we met. We do this while maintaining the confidentiality of our visitors.

The report includes:

- A two-page Executive Summary to highlight key observations and trends of this past year.
- Insights into how the Ombuds Office was being used during the last academic year, what services were provided, the types of concerns presented, and any broader implications beyond those concerns.
- Description of our ongoing outreach efforts.
- Feedback from the annual survey which is sent by KU Governance Office to the KU community, at the end of each academic year. The call-out boxes, highlighted in red text throughout the report, are survey respondent comments from the survey responses; shared without identifiable information. They provide further perspective on what visitors experienced when engaging with the Office.
- Reflections on the year, as well as trends and themes of importance, as the KU community moves forward, are also included. We provide the Ombuds Office's notable priorities for the upcoming academic year.
- In the Appendix, we provide a tabular view to accompany each appropriate chart and table, for the purpose of enhancing accessibility.

“Ombuds made many tremendous recommendations and listened thoroughly to my concerns.”

Finally, the report concludes with brief information about the Ombuds Office and its staff, including references and links to additional information. We hope this will provide a deepening of the readers' appreciation for the history, purpose, and context of the Ombuds Office.

Executive Summary

We mark the year covering this report by offering a summary of top issues, key trends and observations, as well as sharing notable accomplishments of the Ombuds team. The full report offers more detailed commentary, reflections, and plans for the upcoming year.

Table 1. Top Issues from visitor information and survey data for the 2022-2023:

Primary points from visitor information:	Primary points from feedback survey data:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continuing an overall trend each year: the number of visitors has increased roughly 8% for a total of 207 visitors, comprising of 271 overall visits (our work with a visitor may entail more than one visit.)Consistent use of the Office across various KU member groups: with a notable increase in the percentages of faculty and undergraduates using our services; a slight reduction in grad students; and a more significant reduction in the number of staff.The top issue identified by visitors this year was "Evaluative relationships". Rounding out the top three are "Peer/Colleague Relationships" and "Academic Matters." These top three tend to trade places each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This year saw a marked reduction in the number of people responding to the annual spring survey of the Ombuds Office. The low response rate this year made it difficult to consider the meaning of the few responses received. We will develop complementary ways of surveying those who use our Office.Even with the small number of respondents (19) who had used our services, their overall satisfaction with the Ombuds Office remains very high and nearly identical to previous years.The survey revealed a continued need for clarity at KU on what the Ombuds Office does in relation to other compliance or dispute resolution processes across the campus. Occasional confusion continues, although we regularly outline the Ombuds Office's standards of practice and differentiate between formal, non-confidential mechanisms for dispute resolution, when we meet with members of the KU community.

Three important categories of trends are noted for the past year:

First, informal conflict resolution: there is growing momentum and interest, among partner offices at KU, to shape a coordinated approach to informal resolution processes. In our conversations with Human Resources (HR), Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging (DEIB), Office of Civil Rights

& Title IX (OCRTIX), and Faculty Affairs, there is growing excitement for enhanced coordination, shared goals, vision, and collaboration among various units on campus that support people in conflict. The focus continues to be on processes that are informal, like restorative practices, facilitated dialogues, and the like. Addressing this can strengthen our collective use of tools and capacity for the informal resolution of an array of conflict and interpersonal challenges faced by students, staff, and faculty.

Second, self-disclosure of identity: The complexity of the intersectionality of identity, with the stresses of interpersonal and interprofessional relationships, confirms the need for the confidential, off-the-record, thought-partners and conflict coaching that the Ombuds Office offers the KU community. In the Ombuds Office, we see people of various identities and backgrounds who may or may not disclose that information to us. They may also have issues they are facing that may or may not be directly tied to their identities. The significant number of visitors who chose not to self-disclose race/ethnicity or gender/gender identity expression when contacting or visiting with us, has us continuing to ponder how the KU Community wants to engage with the Ombuds Office around aspects of their identities and backgrounds.

Third, expanded support for accommodations: There are several ways that various efforts around KU are coalescing to enhance and refine accommodation support for students, staff, and faculty. We note that in addition to the ADA accommodations office, and ADA Resource Center for Equity and Accessibility, HR has also created a new position, a director of mental health and well-being; there is also support for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and other ADA support. These are offices and staff we often mention when talking to visitors. Additionally, the DEIB Office is emphasizing the importance of these services in its communications with campus.

Ombuds Office Growth: Completion of Search for University and Associate Ombuds:

In August of 2022, after a nationwide search, Ada Emmett was named the University Ombuds in a permanent role after a year and a half as the acting/interim University Ombuds. Following a growing need for an additional full-time ombuds and receiving support from the Provost's Office and University Governance, the Ombuds Office was able to launch a search for a second full-time ombuds. After a nationwide search in Spring 2023 for our inaugural full-time Associate Ombuds position, Herschenia Brown was hired and started in the new academic/fiscal year. We are excited for the possibilities and the capacity her expertise will provide the Ombuds team and the KU community.

FY23 by the Numbers

The year covering this report was marked by an 8% increase in the number of visitors to our Office. The Office had 192 visitors the previous year, and 207 visitors the current year. Those visitors need 271 visits (our work with a person may entail more than one visit.)

The Ombuds Office sees all members of the KU Lawrence and Edwards campus community: students, staff, faculty, and occasionally alumni, former KU employees, and parents of KU students. In this section we will describe aggregated information gathered about our visitors, while maintaining their anonymity.

KU Membership

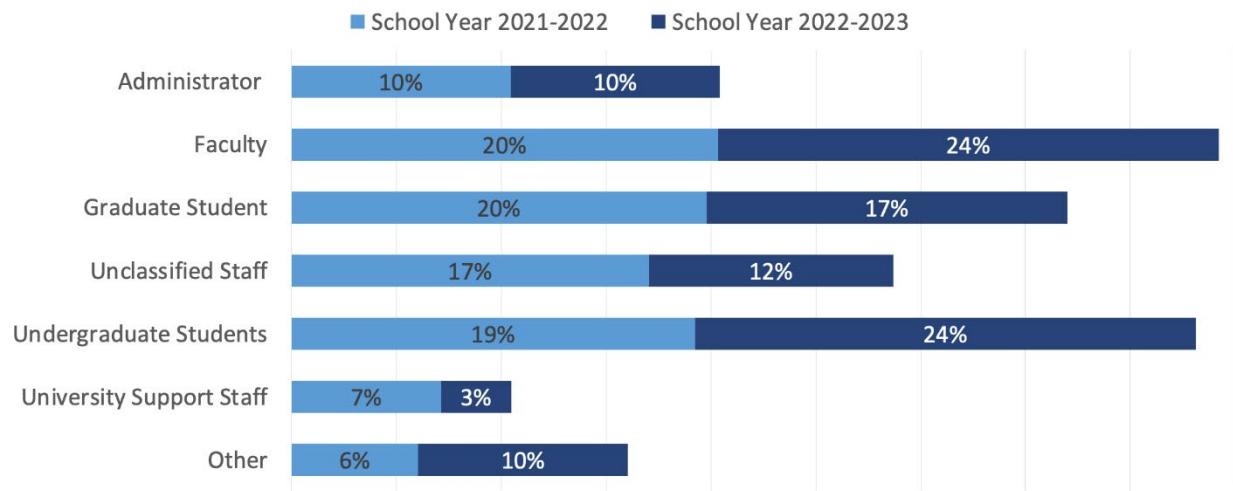
In Chart 1 below, we share the KU membership of those that visited the Ombuds Office, and how those percentages compared with the previous year.

This year there were a greater percentage of faculty who visited with us, a slight reduction in graduate students, and a more notable reduction in staff requesting to meet with the Ombuds. We also note an increase in the number of undergraduate students seeking our office's services. The percentage of those whose primary KU membership was "administrator" stayed steady. The percentage change (an increase) of the people designated in the category of "other" is interesting since this category typically refers to parents, alumni, former KU employees, and sometimes community members, who have had some interaction or experience with KU and want to consult the Ombuds.

As other units and service offices at KU connect with the Ombuds Office their referrals to us increase, which may explain why we are seeing more undergraduates, for example. It may also be explained by the placement of our bus signs a year ago in Spring 2022.

"Ombuds seemed to be my only hope after seeking other option[s]. My one phone call and lengthy chat gave me the clarity and empowerment to push forward."

Chart 1. Percent of Visitors by KU Membership ([accessible table view](#))



What are People’s Concerns?

Nature of the Issues

When people come to visit the Ombuds Office we also note the nature of their concerns. There may be only one, but more often they are facing an intersectionality of issues, so any issues that come up during a visit are noted.

Overall people come to our Office because they have a situation that warrants an “off-the-record” conversation, and they want to feel heard and explore their options. If we were to summarize this year’s central issues, we could conclude that people are often in distress with one another, supervisors, colleagues, or professors and that the well-being of those interpersonal relationships are essential to their happiness, productivity, and longevity at KU.

Below, in Table 1., we share the top six (of over 20) categories of issues we saw this past year. Although the top six have not changed from the previous year, the prevalence of each did change. This year, the number of visitors whose issues centered on a category of issues we call *Evaluative Relationships* increased. That category of issues rose to the top while last year’s top category *Peer and Colleague Relationships* moved to the third most common issue. *Evaluative Relationship* issues can include supervisor/supervisee, student/professor, mentee/mentor, and

faculty/chair. We wonder whether the further shift to being on campus in full-time or formalized hybrid capacities might explain the dominance of this issue among our visitors, as was the case prior to the 2020 Spring Semester.

Table 1. Top Issues Across Visitors for the 2020-2021 & 2021-2022 School Years

Top Six Issues Across School Years	
2021-2022	2022-2023
1. Peer & Colleague Relationships	1. Evaluative Relationships
2. Evaluative Relationships	2. Academic Matters
3. Academic Matters	3. Peer & Colleague Relationships
4. Discrimination & Harassment	4. Discrimination & Harassment
5. Values, Ethics, Standards & Organizational, Strategic, Mission-Related	5. Values, Ethics, Standards & Organizational, Strategic, Mission-Related
6. University Policy/Appeals	6. University Policy/Appeals

Along similar lines to the previous issue, the issue of *Academic Matters* rose to the number two position. *Academic Matters* issues often relate to student concerns with instructors or other service units related to their academic lives, as well as instructors facing challenges related to their academic roles. These issues may have to do with the fact that returning to regular operations, after two years of navigating the pandemic, is a challenge. These types of challenges often require exploration of the kinds of emergent policies and practices that might best serve the community currently, and in the near future.

The percentage of visitor concerns to the Ombuds Office regarding *Discrimination and Harassment* has held steady from last year. However, since the overall number of visitors has increased across all categories this year, the number of individuals reporting discrimination and harassment issues has also increased. This underscores the importance of continually making efforts to develop and support people as they navigate their professional, relational, and interpersonal differences and disagreements, as well as their experiences with discrimination and harassment.

“I had a very successful experience with the Ombuds Office.”

Rounding out the top six issues are the categories of *Value, Ethics, Standards* and *Organizational, Strategic, Mission-Related* and the *University Policy/Appeals*. These two categories of issues are consistently in the top six, year after year. This consistency signals an unchanging need for the KU community members to be understood and for the community to become aware of the changes being considered and/or implemented by KU leadership. In a way, it is a standing invitation to KU leadership, at all levels, to identify and communicate potential changes to strategies, policies, and processes as regularly as possible. This will provide the opportunity for KU community members to better understand, adopt, and suggest adaptations to these potential changes.

How Did We Engage with the KU Community?

The Ombuds Office engages with the KU community in a number of ways. Below we describe the various services and outreach efforts we deploy. These efforts bring greater awareness about what the Ombuds Office is, how we work, what can be expected from engaging with us, and our standards of practice.

Services Provided

When an individual visits the Ombuds Office, in addition to hearing the visitor's issues and discussing how they might proceed, we also note what types of services we provided during our meeting. Our services can range from conflict coaching, facilitations, policy review, and exploration of possible referrals to other offices, or services, within KU.

In Chart 2 below, the predominant services we provided directly to our 207 visitors this past year were discussions regarding the purpose and use of other offices (see, *Referred to another Office*), followed by *Conflict Coaching*, *Resource/Policy/Strategy Guidance*, *Group Facilitation*, and consultation on *Organizational Development*.

In most visits we offer multiple services. A note on what we mean by "referrals" or "referred to": we may discuss with a visitor the services other KU offices offer, in order to give the visitor a greater understanding of those other units/services. It also offers our visitors insight into what the process involves if they choose to interact with the next office. It may simply be mention of the

office in passing, or a closer examination together about the work, policies, and processes of another office or service.

Chart 2. Distribution of Services Provided with Visitors ([accessible table view](#))



We also keep track of the number of times we may see a specific visitor for their given circumstance. This past year, over 60% of our visitors came for one visit, with close to 40% seeing us for two or more visits. This is a significant increase of people seeing us for multiple visits from the previous year (23% had two or more visits last year.) On average we spend approximately an hour with a visitor—but with a range from as short as a half hour to a more common 1 or 2-hour visit.

In (Spring 2022) we began noting which KU offices/services might be options that visitors could explore in resolving their issue. These included Faculty Affairs, Governance/Policy, Human Resources (HR), Reporting/Hotlines, Student/Academic Services, Civil Rights & Title IX Office, Unit/Dept. Administrators, and the DEIB Office, among others. Like with Ombuds Office services, visitors approach another office on a voluntary basis, and we do not require them to inform us if they meet with that office or service.

Of the visitors about whom we collected information in this past school year, we explored referral options, for KU support services or processes, 70% of the time. Of those 70%, the referral options brought forward (from most often to least) were: Unit/Dept Administration, Civil Rights & Title IX Office, Student Affairs/Academic Success, Reporting/Hotlines, Human Resources (HR), DEIB/other, Governance/Policy, and Faculty Affairs.

Providing Organizational Feedback

The University Ombuds has another responsibility described in its Charter to offer organizational feedback to the institution on trends and systemic issues the Ombuds identify. The University Ombuds does this without breaching the confidentiality of its visitors' identities. We can provide important information about gaps in policies, units struggling with interpersonal or leadership challenges, and other trends in the well-being of the organization for all students, staff, and

faculty, at any level and set of circumstances.

Something the Ombuds Office should continue to do: "Keep showing your level of professionalism and dedication."

In addition, we offer reflections in the Annual Report as feedback to the institution. An example of how this Ombuds Office practice can look is offered in the following

paragraphs.

Self-expression of identity among our visitors, including the identity of race and gender, has been an area the Ombuds Office has given particular attention to in the last few years, as it relates to the Office's practice, coupled with recent societal events and conversations, both domestically and globally. The recent June 29, 2023 Supreme Court decision of [Students for Fair Admissions Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College](#), introduces an additional dynamic to practices, policies, and processes among individuals and teams, whom manage and support self-expression of identity within these structures. (The case was regarding ending affirmative action in the application process for colleges and universities.) As you read through what is shared in our reflections, we invite you to consider how this topic might be present in the minds and hearts of various communities within KU.

Reflections on Self-Expression

Historically, there have been two moments when a visitor to our Office might self-express race/ethnicity and gender/gender identity with the Ombuds Office. In prior years, the first was when a person requests a visit or contacts us to schedule an appointment. At that moment we provide them with the chance to share demographic information with us through a confidential web form. (We stopped using that webform late in the FY23 time period covered by this report.) The other is when we are meeting with a visitor.

We are interested in inviting visitors to share with us this information if they are willing. Our hope is to more fully understand the possible roots of concern that visitors have, as well as where the root of the problems might be. This allows us to both offer a space for visitors to consider their options, as well as share feedback to the organization about experiences and patterns across the KU community. Our focus is to be “an ear to the people” and advocate for fair processes for all who might identify in a number of different ways beyond these community-specific labels.

Ways we can improve: “Find a way to advertise more to graduate students about your existence--it is so useful for us to have somewhere to go to talk about some of our concerns with the security that it won't get back to our advisors unless we want it to.”

We have used this self-expression model for the past two full academic years in combination with our own reflection. We then researched and consulted with two KU resources: the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging; and the Center for Sexuality and Gender Identity.

In that timeframe, we have found the preference among visitors is to not self-express, either before or during their visit. Therefore, this information is captured in the demographic information as unexpressed. In the case of race/ethnicity this is roughly 95% of the time, and in the case of gender/gender identity this is approximately 45%.

The fact that individuals choose not to share these aspects of their identities does not mean we did not see people where these identities are not salient for them. Still, this experience of understanding identity, in the context of our services, has led us to continually explore possible approaches we might take to adjust our practices. We do this with the hope to better understand how visitors identify, why it matters to share or not share aspects of their identities, and why it matters to the KU community.

We also invite other KU units to consider the same or similar exploration of identity in their areas. Two resources to help further that journey can be the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and the Center for Sexuality and Gender Identity.

Presentations about the Ombuds

Another form of our engagement is outreach—meeting the KU community where they are. We make a concerted effort to reach out to and accept invitations from an array of different groups on campus who are orienting new staff and students or offering professional development to

current employees. During FY2023, we presented to six different groups reaching close to 100 people. We offered information about the Ombuds Office, our services, and the central principles of practice—confidentiality, impartiality, informality, and independence. At some of these gatherings the purpose was to enhance mutual understanding of our offices' work and services. The Ombuds Office would share about our unique organizational position, and in turn we would hear from the staff in those units about their work, how and when they might refer to our office, and the types of struggle people they serve face.

Facilitated Dialogues for Small Groups

This year the Ombuds team worked intensively with parties who were struggling with their work, and academic or interpersonal relationships.

Each facilitated dialogue, assisting two or more parties, requires a significant time investment of the Ombuds Office staff. Prior to meeting together, we meet with each party separately. During

“The Ombuds Office was very professional and treated all ... in my situation with respect, caring and kindness. In addition they were able to provide additional guidance to help the University improve in selected areas.”

this time, we prepare each individual for the group meeting, as well as design the process of that meeting. It is also a time commitment of the individuals participating in a dialogue with the party with whom they are in conflict or have interpersonal issues. The Office itself approaches each of these facilitated dialogues with the

intention of moving the parties toward a better understanding of their needs and interests, along with charting a path forward. This past academic year we facilitated a handful of dialogues on issues ranging from supervisor/supervisee relationship challenges to roommate/interpersonal relationships.

Ombuds Day 2022

The American Bar Association designates the second Thursday of October as Ombuds Day. According to the International Ombuds Association (IOA), the goals of Ombuds Day are to serve “as an additional opportunity to educate and raise awareness among the public about the history and practices of the ombuds profession including the various ombuds models, the roles they play, the services they offer, and the value provided.” On October 13, 2022, we celebrated the fifth

annual Ombuds Day by hosting a tabling event in the Union, partnering with the Tea@3, which is offered monthly by Student Union Activities.

Advertising and Outreach

We consistently receive comments in the annual survey, sent to the KU community, that we need to spread awareness of our office and services. Each year, we make a variety of shifts in our marketing, outreach, and engagement to further help the full community recognize the unique space the Ombuds Office offers.

One such effort we made at the suggestion of our graduate assistant was the placement of posters on the KU bus line. Our graduate student designed and printed posters to be placed on all 20 bus routes, starting March 4, 2022 through Spring 2024. Below is a reproduction of the sign.

**Are You in a Difficult Situation
and Unsure What To Do?**

BE HEARD **FEEL EMPOWERED** **EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS** **DECIDE WHAT TO DO**

 **UNIVERSITY
OMBUDS OFFICE**
Confidential, Independent, Informal, Impartial

ombuds@ku.edu
785.864.7261


Exp. Date: 12/31/2023

Survey Feedback

Each year in the Spring semester, University Governance (now in collaboration with the Provost's Office) sends a survey about the Ombuds Office to the entire KU community—close to 30,000 people. The purpose of the survey is to understand the degree to which the community knows

about the Ombuds Office; including the work of the Office, whether the survey respondents have used the Office, as well as their experience with us. We consider it a valuable snapshot, and a supplement to our own information, about visitors and their experience with the Ombuds Office.

“I am very appreciative of the time, attention, and guidance provided by the Ombuds Office...”

The survey is designed to ask a first question about whether the respondent is familiar with the Ombuds Office. If their response is “no”, the survey ends.

If respondents *are* familiar with the Office, they are then asked whether they have used the Ombuds Office's services in the past year.

The written comments submitted in the survey offer an illuminating opportunity to hear the voices of those who have visited with us through the following three open-ended questions:

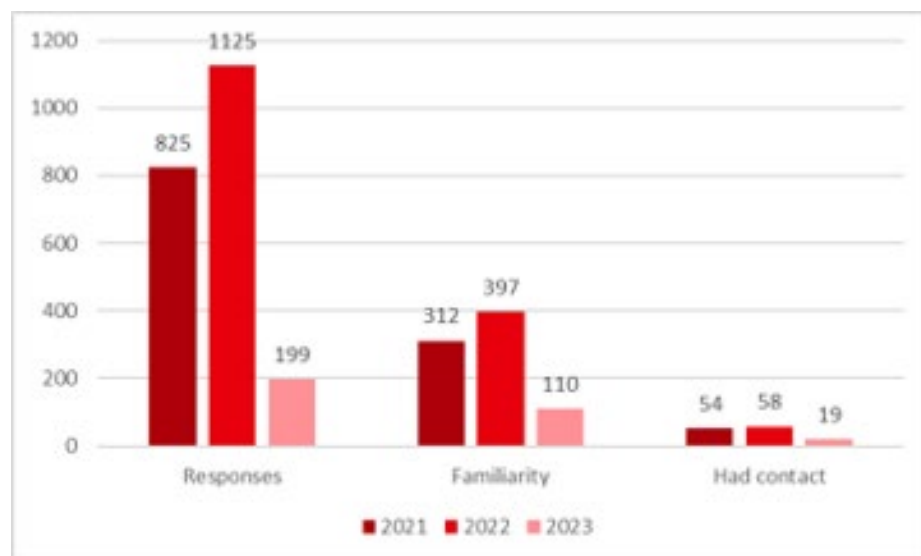
- What could the Ombuds improve on?
- What should the Ombuds continue to do?
- What other comments would you like to share?

We hear pointed, and often poignant responses, from which we learn each year. The red highlighted text in the call out boxes shared throughout this report are quotes from respondents' comments.

Survey Feedback by the Numbers:

This year, 199 people responded to our survey, 110 of those were familiar with the Ombuds Office, and 19 of those respondents indicated that they had used the Ombuds Office in the last year. Those 19 respondents were then invited to answer 26 questions; several of those offered additional comments. This low response rate was a notable reduction from the previous year. We are exploring the factors that led to this reduction, along with ways to gather additional feedback in the coming year, beyond this annual survey sent out by Governance/Provost's Office. However, the ratios of overall respondents *familiar* with the Ombuds Office (n-110) to those that had responded to the initial survey question (n-199) was 55%. (See Chart 3, below.) The ratio between initial respondents, and those respondents that were *familiar* with the Ombuds Office, has varied widely over the past 5 years, with last year's being 13%.

Chart 3. Raw numbers, responses, familiarity, and contacts 2021 and 2022 ([accessible table view](#))



The number of respondents in the final group who *have used our services in the past year* (n=19) is always the smallest. It is that group that constitutes the bulk of the survey data and feedback. Even with the low response rate, we do gain a detailed sense of what those 19 people expressed, helping us further reflect on and develop our practices.

Chart 4 below identifies the percentage of survey respondents from each KU community group who were familiar with the Office (n=110). We see that those identifying as administrators were the largest category. This is important, as we need to work with them to improve processes for support staff, faculty, and students. It also signals with whom we need to do further outreach. The smallest percentage of those with familiarity were undergraduates. They also make up the largest group and provided the most survey responses; even if to answer that they were not familiar with the Ombuds Office. This year we note that more university support staff survey respondents were familiar with us than in previous years as a relative percentage. The category of "Other" combines several additional categories who identified themselves as alumni, post-doc research staff, and parents of students.

Chart 4. Percentage of community members who were familiar with the Ombuds Office.
[\(accessible table view\)](#)

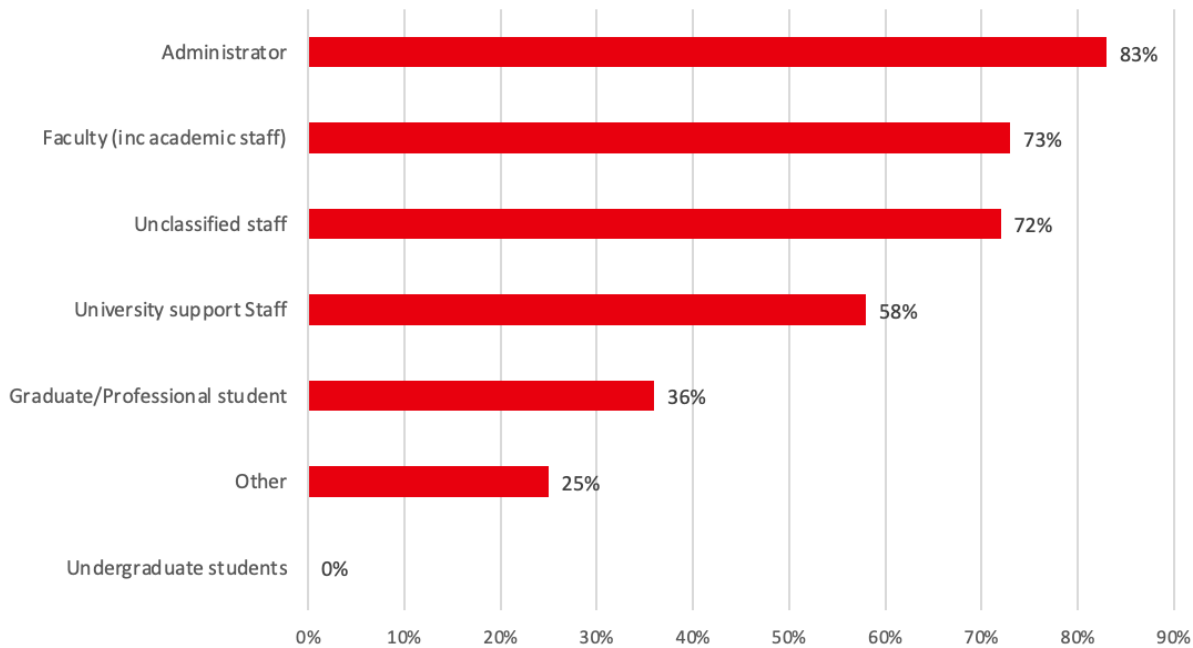
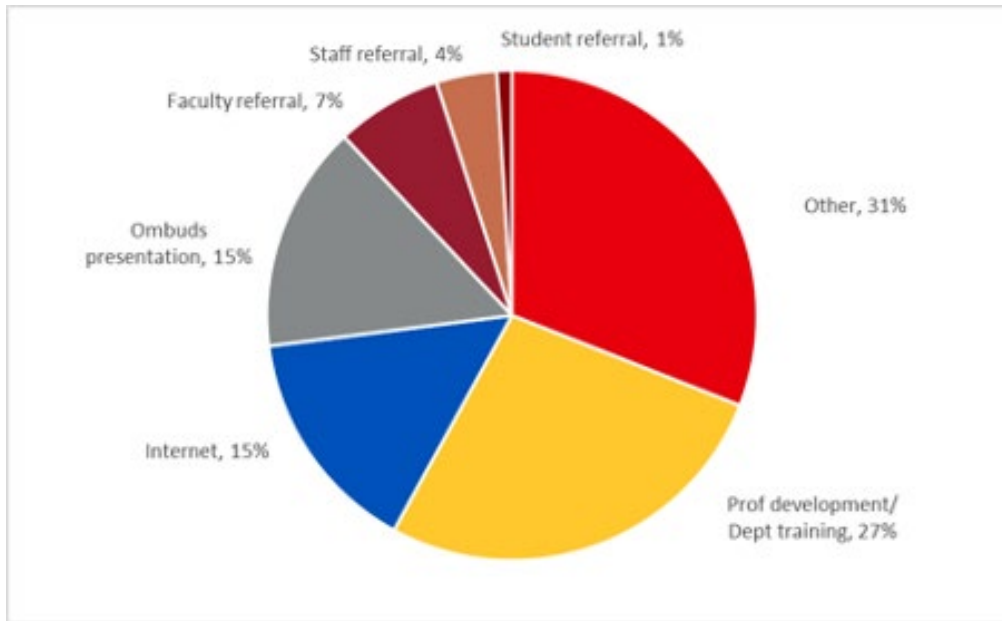


Chart 5 below shows the ways the Ombuds Office was found by those survey respondents who had contact with us during the past year. We note an increase in the percentage who found us via the Internet and decrease in those that found us via an Ombuds presentation. This makes sense since we passed another year where the number of presentations we offered was reduced, and the types of trainings the Ombuds Office conducted in the past were taken on by HR units (e.g., partnering with Human Resources for Compassionate Communication trainings). With the hiring of our new full-time Associate Ombuds (July 2023) we hope the presentations and workshops offered by the Office will increase, thereby reaching more of the KU community. The “Other” category accounts for a third of respondents and leaves us pondering what other categories we might include in future surveys, or whether people chose to mask their actual KU affiliation.

Chart 5. How people found out about the Ombuds Office ([accessible table view](#))



Survey respondents who have used the Ombuds Office were also asked what they would have done *without* the services of the Office. This year there was a notable change that occurred in response to that question.

In brief, the survey responses indicate an increase from last year in those respondents who, without the Ombuds Office, would have filed a formal action of some type (24%). An increased percentage of survey respondents (also 24%) indicated that they would not have spoken to anyone about their issue. We note in our work that by addressing issues early and sharing those concerns with confidential resources like the Ombuds Office, visitors are better equipped to resolve their issues before they become so severe that formal processes must be involved, or the person feels unsupported and the issues fester.

In Chart 6 below, respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction with the service they received from the Ombuds Office. A Likert scale was used to specify their level of agreement or disagreement with nine statements, using seven points for greater nuance. The percentages of those who agree or strongly agree (95%) and disagree/strongly disagree (5%) differs by only one percentage point from the previous year, and we had a smaller response rate (n-19) than last year.

Chart 6. Percent satisfied by service received from the Ombuds Office ([accessible table view](#))

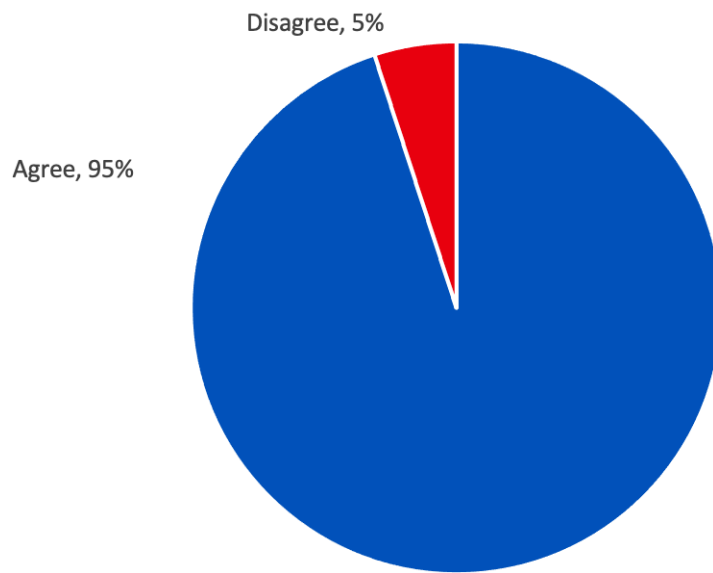


Chart 6 (above) was created by correlating and aggregating the responses to the following questions:

- It was easy to contact the Ombuds Office and schedule an appointment.
- I was able to meet with the Ombuds in a reasonable amount of time.
- The Ombuds listened to my individual needs and concerns.
- The Ombuds treated me with fairness.
- The Ombuds treated me respectfully.
- The Ombuds treated me without prejudice or bias.
- The Ombuds respected my confidentiality and asked for my permission before speaking with others.

Among those that took the survey and have used the Ombuds Office services, an overwhelming percentage are satisfied. Focusing on this large and consistent percentage gives us ongoing confidence that our work is meeting the direct needs of the KU community with whom we engage, as well as aligns with the standards of practice of the International Ombuds Association, (IOA).

Final Reflections & Priorities for FY23

Reflections

Navigating change: The staff of the Ombuds Office have, along with our peers across campus, attempted to navigate the post-pandemic challenges and their effects with agility and safety to each other and visitors to the Office. We are proud of our collective efforts, collective learning, and leaning into the changes to continue to offer the campus community a safe space to have off-the-record, confidential conversations. This space also allows visitors to explore their situations informally and consider their options. Visitors now have an option for in-person or Zoom meetings, which provides additional flexibility and comfort for their schedules and work/life situations. The KU Community also has an expanded presence of ombuds, with the hiring of a second, full-time Ombuds.

Offering organizational feedback: During this time, we strove to provide regular, timely, and supportive organizational feedback to administrators of various units, in our effort to be advocates for fair processes. The University Ombuds has monthly or bi-monthly meetings with key senior administrative leaders whose work and areas overlap with issues we see. We do this to enhance institutional learning, offer our reflections, as well as deliberate together on trends and issues that are surfacing.

***“They were
FANTASTIC at
directing me
towards the
information I
required....”***

Greater cross-unit collaboration for conflict resolution: Still, there is a growing need for visitors, when collaborating, to engage with additional conflict management system resources. The Ombuds Office can support this growing need. It will necessitate cross-system collaboration and coordination to support unit-level change and conflict resolution, along with strengthening our partnerships with more collaborators around campus who work informally or formally in the conflict management system at KU. Some of those offices include Human Resources (HR), Office of Civil Rights & Title XI, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging, Faculty Development, Student Affairs, Academic Success, Graduate Studies, Law School’s Mediation Clinic, and others.

Collaborations may include co-sponsoring or co-planning workshops and trainings, and the inclusion of restorative practices into, or as an off-ramp from, formal processes. Such collaborative efforts may also include the development of non-punitive and non-retributive

responses to harm. Responses that are restorative and transformative can complement or supplement other formal processes already in place. The Ombuds Office is poised to be a partner in the design and implementation of such programs.

Priorities

By the time this report is completed, the semester will already be underway, and close to the end of the first quarter of the new fiscal year. We now have a better idea how to imagine and shape the Ombuds Office's priorities for the remainder of this academic year. Below we list our intentions:

1. **Reaching more of KU:** Expand and focus our outreach efforts, particularly to marginalized communities within the staff, faculty, and student populations at KU.
2. **Inviting feedback from our visitors:** Develop and implement a plan that provides additional feedback mechanisms to the KU community who use our services. Design survey options that will maintain the confidentiality of those surveyed and yet be exclusively for those that have used or considered using our services. Expand on the Annual Survey that is sent out from University Governance and the Provost's Office, which provides an additional avenue for the entire KU community to comment on our services, their awareness of it, and feedback they wish to share.
3. **Team building and transitions:** Onboarding of our new full-time Associate Ombuds, Herschenia Brown, who started in July 2023, to enhance our outreach, presentation, and workshop capacity, and who will help raise the KU community's awareness of the Office and support a larger volume of visitors we can see. Our part-time Associate Ombuds, Mike Rozinsky, with us since Spring 2021, will transition away from his part-time role. Our long-standing part-time Administrative Associate, Ellen Slikker, completed her Master's degree and was offered a full-time position in her new professional field. We added a new part-time Administrative Associate, Molly Altman, to support connecting with and scheduling of visitors, plus other important administrative support.

Office Overview

What the Ombuds Office Does

The ethical foundations of the Ombuds' work offered in service to the campus community are four pillars of organizational ombuds practice: Confidentiality, Independence, Impartiality, and Informality. The Ombuds Office and its staff work hard to embody these principles, which are outlined in the [Standards of Practice](#) established by the International Ombuds Association. Readers can learn more about the functioning of the University of Kansas Ombuds Office by reading our previous [Annual Reports](#), as well as by perusing our [website](#) that includes, [our long history](#), [what we do and don't do](#), and an in-depth look at our work through our [Charter](#), updated in 2022 with approval from the Chancellor, Provost, and General Counsel and with review from University Governance.

Ombuds Office Team:

The Ombuds Office team composition has gone through several revitalizing and stabilizing phases in the last two years, and at this writing is now comprised as follows:

University Ombuds, Ada Emmett

Associate Ombuds, Herschenia Brown

Administrative Associate, Molly Altman

Part-time Associate Ombuds, Mike Rozinsky

This report was prepared by the committed staff of the Ombuds Office as a team effort, September 2023

Appendix – Tabular View of Charts within the Report

Table View of Chart 1: Percentage of Visitors by KU Membership

<i>Percentage of Visitors by KU Membership</i>	Administrator	Faculty	Graduate Student	Unclassified Staff	Under-graduate Students	University Support Staff	Other
<i>School Year 2021-2022</i>	10%	20%	20%	17%	19%	7%	6%
<i>School Year 2022-2023</i>	10%	24%	17%	12%	24%	3%	10%

Table View of Chart 2: Distribution of Services Provided with Visitors

	Referred to another Office	Conflict Coaching	Resource/Policy / Strategic Guidance	Group Facilitation	Organizational Development
<i>Distribution of Service Provided with Visitors from most often to least often by numeric order</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Table View of Chart 3: Raw numbers, Responses, Familiarity, and Contacts 2021, 2022, and 2023

Year	2021	2022	2023
<i>Responses</i>	825	1,125	199
<i>Familiarity</i>	312	397	110
<i>Had Contact</i>	54	58	19

Table View of Chart 4: Percentage of Community Members who were Familiar with the Ombuds Office

	Administrat or	Faculty (inc. academic staff)	Unclassifie d Staff	University Support Staff	Graduate/ Professiona l Students	Other	Undergrad uate Students
<i>Percentage of KU members who were familiar with the Ombuds Office</i>	83%	73%	72%	58%	36%	25%	0%

Table View of Chart 5: How People Found Out about the Ombuds Office

	Professional Development/ Departmental Training	Other	Internet	Ombuds Presentation	Faculty Referral	Staff Referral	Student Referral
<i>Percentage of How People Found Out about the Ombuds Office</i>	27%	31%	15%	15%	7%	4%	1%

Table View of Chart 6: Percentage satisfied by service received from the Ombuds Office

	Agree	Disagree
<i>Percentage satisfied by service received from the Ombuds Office</i>	95%	5%